

Jim Carroll

Staying motivated

Don't take this slowdown lying down

If you're reading this publication, you may be searching for a new job or career, or have in the back of your mind that you'd better start thinking about your future.

And certainly through the last year anyone in the IT sector has had their share of career concerns. We've gone from a situation in which politicians, pundits and executives talked about the "brain-drain," and painted a picture of a national need to attract and retain skilled IT professionals. It seemed that anyone in the IT sector was guaranteed an easy, glorious and prosperous future.

Then came the downturn. Many of those same professionals who once seemed to be "Masters of the Universe" found themselves applying for unemployment insurance, scouring the want ads, and hitting the online job sites. What a difference a year or two can make.

The good news is I sense we're coming out of this downturn quicker than we might have thought, and I'd hazard a guess most people will find they're quickly recovering from the dire career circumstances they have found themselves in.

And yet, as we move forward, people should remember that there are a couple of valuable lessons to be learned.

In a time of challenge, keep your spirits up.

A year ago, I wrote an article in *htc* entitled "Why so glum, chum?" (You can find it online at www.BrassRing.ca). I noted things were going rather sour in the tech sector, but in the long run things would come back. I finished the article off by noting "you gotta keep the faith, you gotta believe and you gotta keep going."

Based on the e-mail I received, the article struck a chord with quite a few people, some of whom were in desperate circumstances.

I corresponded at length with one fellow who, in a matter of months, had lost his job with a HiTech company, dealt with the death of a parent, and continued to try to cope with an extremely complex and life-threatening situation involving a family member. All of this had led him into very difficult financial circumstances, with the looming and realistic possibility of an inability to pay his bills.

Talk about challenging! It makes one wonder how we can live in a world in which so much can be tossed at one person at one time.

At the time, given his complex and difficult situation, he was quite down on himself. And yet, the column seemed to light a spark within him, or so he told me. Today? He's doing fine. He found a position that has kept him actively employed for over eight months, with contract renewals occurring on a regular basis. Also, the family member medical situation has taken a turn for the better, and his financial situation has been restored.

I think there is a lot we can learn from his situation: No matter how bad things get and how desperate things might become, you've got to keep the proper frame of mind and attitude. You'll doom yourself if you don't fight that which is working against you. I really believe it was his change in atti-

tude that gave him the impetus he needed to really get out there and work at recovering, rather than sitting back and simply hoping things would get better.

If you are still struggling, recognize that your attitude is the most powerful weapon you have.

Use time to your advantage.

When things become challenging, use spare time to enhance your skills, open new doors, or establish new opportunities. It's easy, when you aren't motivated, to sit around and wait for

result that around the world, corporate and organizational events were put on the backburner.

I had some dark and miserable days as I thought through the implications. But I knew that things would come back — they had to. And so I adopted the attitude that I wasn't going to take this business slowdown lying down. I spent a lot of time actively marketing myself — opening doors to various global speakers bureaus, writing columns for new publications, floating book proposals.

The results paid off. Today, I find myself doing speeches in such far-flung places as Hungary and Costa Rica. I've landed a variety of new columns, and am now represented by additional speakers bureaus around the world. And I'm finding the phone is starting to ring again as the conference business picks up; many of the calls are directly related to the marketing efforts I undertook during the slow time.

The lesson? It's your effort that will dig you out of the hole that you might find yourself in. No one is going to find you a job or career — you can't sit around waiting for things to happen. Not only do you have to be in the right frame of mind, but you've also got to aggressively pursue the opportunities that undoubtedly exist. ◀

Jim Carroll is co-author of the new book Get a [Digital] Life: An Internet Reality Check. He can be reached via e-mail at jcarroll@jimcarroll.com, or online at www.jimcarroll.com.

When things become challenging, use spare time to enhance your skills, open new doors, or establish new opportunities.

good things to happen. But good things will only happen if you decide to make them happen.

I speak from experience. In my case, the conference business (where I make most of my money as a keynote speaker) was effectively shut down by the events of Sept. 11. I too found myself in a bit of a difficult situation as conference after conference was cancelled or postponed. Suddenly, it seemed people didn't want to travel anymore, with the